WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of treating withdrawal or abstinence syndrome in a drug dependent or opioid tolerant patient in need of such treatment, which method comprises transdermal administration of an amount of buprenorphine effective to reduce withdrawal symptoms in the patient.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the patient is a pregnant woman.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the pregnant woman is addicted to an opiate.

4. The method of claim 1 which comprises:

(a) administering to said patient a first buprenorphine-containing transdermal dosage form for a first dosing period that is no longer than about 5 days;

(b) administering to said patient a second buprenorphine-containing transdermal dosage form for a second dosing period that is no longer than about 5 days, wherein the second dosage form comprises the same dosage or a greater dosage of buprenorphine than the first dosage form; and

(c) administering to said patient a third buprenorphine-containing transdermal dosage form for a third dosing period for at least 2 days, wherein the third dosage form comprises a greater dosage of buprenorphine than the second dosage form.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the dosing regimen results in a plasma buprenorphine profile wherein the mean plasma buprenorphine concentration after administration of the third dosage form is about 800 pg/ml.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the first, second, and third transdermal dosage forms contain the amounts of buprenorphine as set forth in one row of the following table:

First (mg)	Second (mg)	Third (mg)
5	5	10
5	10	10
5	10	20
10	10	20

10	20	20

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising extended subsequent dosing periods with subsequent dosage forms for a given time period as needed by the patient to achieve desired relief from withdrawal or abstinence from drug dependence or tolerance.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the subsequent dosage forms comprise 10 mg of buprenorphine.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the subsequent dosage forms comprise 20 mg of buprenorphine.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein the subsequent dosage forms comprise 30 mg of buprenorphine.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein the subsequent dosage forms comprise 40 mg of buprenorphine.

12. The method of claim 7, wherein the subsequent dosage forms are replaced every 7 days.

13. The method of claim 7, further comprising subsequent dosage forms to taper down the dosage once symptoms of withdrawal dissipates.

14. The method of claim 7, wherein the dosing regimen results in a plasma buprenorphine profile wherein the mean plasma buprenorphine concentration after administration of the subsequent dosage form is about 800 pg/ml.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said transdermal dosage form is selected from the group consisting of a topical gel, a lotion, an ointment, a transmucosal system, a transmucosal device, and an iontophoretic delivery system.